Naimisaranya Dharma Yatra

The Hub of the Universe

PS: This article is also available on website [Sri Naimisaranya Dhama Yatra]

Naimisaranya, also known as ‘Nimsar’, is the *aranya svarupa* or forest manifestation of Lord Visnu, and is therefore a most sacred tirtha. *'Naimishe'* also refers to Visnu's name, Animish, and *Naimish-kshetra* refers to the Abode of Lord Visnu. Naimisaranya existed at the onset of the universe, and in *Satya-yuga*, it was the first ever pilgrimage site manifested on the Earth planet. Suta Gosvami recited *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to 88,000 sages assembled here. At the juncture of *Dvapara-yuga* and present *Kali-yuga*, eighty thousand sages, headed by Saunaka Rsi wanted to perform a sacrifice to hold off the effect of the oncoming evil age. They approached Brahma and pleaded where they could perform a sacrifice that would counteract the influence of Kali and have the greatest effect.

Brahma told them, “I will send a disc. Follow it and perform your sacrifice where it hits the earth.” The disc (*cakra*) that Brahma sent went spinning down, sped toward the Garbhodaka Ocean and passing through the six planetary systems, it finally struck the earth at Cakra Tirtha, here at Naimisaranya. On seeing that the disc was approaching earth at a tremendous speed, the sages became worried and thought that it would strike the water and the splash would drown the earth. So, they prayed to goddess Durga, the controller of the material energy. She stopped the disc from going any farther.

This pastime explains why the lake at Cakra Tirtha is bottomless. In the 19th century, to discredit this claim and prove that this is a mythology, the British government sent a chain down into the lake to find the bottom. After reaching one and a half miles, they gave up.

In *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 1 chapter 1 verse 4*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada explains,

naimise ’nimisa-ksetre arsayah saunakadayah
satram svargāya lokaya sahasra-samam asata

naimise — in the forest known as Naimisaranya; animisa-ksetre — the spot which is especially a favorite of Visnu (who does not close His eyelids); arsayah — sages; aaunaka-adayah — headed by the sage Saunaka; satram — sacrifice; svargaya — the Lord who is glorified in heaven; lokaya — and for the devotees who are always in touch with the Lord; sahasra — one thousand; samam — years; asata — performed.

"In a holy place in the forest of Naimisaranya, great sages headed by the sage Saunaka assembled to perform a great thousand-year sacrifice for the satisfaction of the Lord and His devotees."

In the Vayaviya Tantra it is said that Brahma, the engineer of this particular universe, contemplated a great wheel which could enclose the universe. The hub of this great circle was fixed at a particular place known as Naimisaranya. Similarly, there is another reference to the forest of Naimisaranya in the Varaha Purana, where it is stated that by performance of sacrifice at this place, the strength of demoniac people is curtailed. Thus, brahmanas prefer Naimisaranya for such sacrificial performances. [Purport]

Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 1 chapter 1 describes that Suta Gosvami recited *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to the assembly of great sages at Naimisaranya. This place is marked by a spot called Suta Gadi. Suta Gadi Temple is on a small, beautiful hillock at a short walk from Chakra Tirtha. Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Lord Balarama are the presiding deities at the main altar. Srila Suta Goswami's deity is on the left side of the main deities.

Chakra Tirtha is situated at the centre of Naimisaranya. This is the exact spot where the wheel sent by Brahma landed on the earth. At Chakra Tirtha there is a huge wheel surrounding the bottomless lake. Many devotees take a holy dip and perform the circumambulation (parikrama) by encircling outside the huge wheel. Around the lake there are important ancient temples dedicated to Lord Rama, Lord Badrinath and Lord Siva. Near the main entrance of Chakra Tirtha, there is a painting of sages headed by Sanuaka Rsi praying to Lord Brahma. The atmosphere at Chakra Tirtha is devotional and captivating. On festival days, a huge number of pilgrims visit this place.

Naimisaranya is situated on the banks of the River Gomati in the Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh. It is an easy 2-hour drive from Lucknow, the state capital. This district is named after Sita as she stayed with Lord Rama at this place during a pilgrimage. Afterwards, King Vikramaditya established this city in the memory of Sita and gave this place the name, Sitapur.

Lord Ramacandra performed the Tenth *Aswamedha yajna* at Naimisaranya after returning from exile, as mentioned in the Ramayana. This place is marked by the ancient Sri Rama Lakshmana Sita Temple (also known as Siddheshwar Mahadev Mandir). The temple has beautiful deities of Sri Sri Sita Rama Lakshmana.

Vyasa Gadi is one of the most important sacred spots in Naimisaranya. Here Srila Vyasadeva bifurcated the Vedas into 6 Sastras, 18 Puranas. Here at Vyasa Gadi (also known as *Vyasa Vatika* or *Vyasadhama*), Veda Vyasa lectured on the *Bhagavata Purana (Srimad-Bhagavatam)* to his own son, Srila Sukadeva Goswami. At the centre of the main altar at Vyasa Gadi Temple there is the deity of Srila Vyasadeva. On his right side there is a deity of Srila Sukadeva Goswami and on left altar is Vyasadeva's father, Parasara Muni. Outside the Vyasa Gadi temple there is an ancient 5099-year-old banyan tree.

Manu-Satrupa Tapsthala is located directly opposite to Vyasa Gadi. At this place, Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa performed rigorous austerities for thousands of years. Naimisaranya at that time was dense forest, and was a famous place for gaining *siddhi*, or concrete achievement in spiritual life. Inside the temple there are deities of Sri Sri Sita Rama. On Their side are Svayambhuva Manu and Satarupa. Outside the main altar, there are deities of Svayambhuva Manu and Satarupa performing austerities. *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto*

4 chapter 1 describes Svayambhuva Manu begot three daughters in his wife, Satarupa, and their names were Akuti, Devahuti and Prasuti. Priyavrata and Uttanapada were their sons. Devahuti got married to Kardama Muni and their son was Lord Kapila.

Dadhici Kunda and Dadhici Muni's residence is at Misrikh, 10 km from Naimisaranya. Here the great sage Dadhici gave up his body to Indra so that he could kill Vrstrasura, as described in Canto 6 of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Inside Dadhici's residence there is the exact spot where he sacrificed his bones. There are also shrines dedicated to his father and mother. There is also a beautiful garden which has a rare Parijata tree. After Indra obtained the body of Dadhici, a thunderbolt was prepared from Dadhici's bones, and a fight took place between Vrstrasura and the demigods at the end of *Satya-yuga* and the beginning of *Treta-yuga*. Sita Kunda (also known as Janaki Kunda) is a short distance from Dadhici Kunda. At this place, Sita devi took bath.

In another pastime about Naimisaranya, the *Ramayana* relates that Ravana once captured Rama and Lakshmana and kept Them in Patalaloka, at the bottom of the universe. But Their servant Hanuman rescued Them. He took Them on his shoulders, sped up through the lower planetary systems, and came back up to the earth at Naimisaranya. So, in Naimisaranya, at a place called Hanuman Garhi, there is a big 18 feet tall self-manifested Hanuman deity standing with Lord Rama on one shoulder and Lakshmana on the other. When devotees come to get darshan, they offer *laddus* (round sweets) to Hanuman Ji. Hanuman Garhi at Naimisaranya is one of the most beautiful places in the Tirtha.

Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 10 chapter 79 describes Lord Balarama's visit to Naimisaranya and the liberation of the demon Balvala. *"At the sacrificial arena of the sages at Naimisaranya forest, a harsh wind began to blow on the new-moon day, spreading the obnoxious smell of pus and obscuring everything with dust. The demon Balvala then appeared there with a trident in his hand, his massive body pitch black and his face very frightening. Lord Baladeva caught the demon with His plow and then struck him a ferocious blow on the head with His club, killing him. The sages chanted Lord Baladeva's glories and presented Him with lavish gifts."*

Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 10.79.30 describes that sometime later, Lord Balarama again went to Naimisaranya: *"Lord Balarama returned to Naimisaranya, where the sages joyfully engaged Him, the embodiment of all sacrifice, in performing various kinds of Vedic sacrifice. Lord Balarama was now retired from warfare."*

Pandavas visited Naimisaranya during their exile. Their residence is close to Hanuman Garhi temple. Here we can have the darshans of Lord Sri Krishna, Queen Kunti and the five Pandavas – Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura visited Naimisaranya. This math was established by Srila Bhakti Siddhantha Saraswati Goswami Thakur on 1925. Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Radha Vinod Vilas Jiu are the presiding deities at the Temple. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta generally opened temples in cities where the people are, but he also opened several temples in places of spiritual importance, even though not very populated. There is a following account in 'A Ray of Visnu': *"Srila Sarasvati Thakura also went to Badarinarayana, the site of the first Srimad-Bhagavatam recitation; to Sukara-tala, the site of the second recitation of the Bhagavatam; and to Naimisaranya, the site of the Bhagavatam's third recitation, and he preached the glories of these places."*

The Holy Dhama of Naimisharanya encompasses a significant area of land, covering a radius of about 130 kilometres. Lord Nityananda, Sripad Ramanujacarya, Sankaracarya and many great saintly personalities have visited Naimisaranya Dhama. The followers of Sripad Ramanujacarya sampradaya count Naimisaranya amongst 108 Divya Desam Ksetras.

This glorious forest of Naimisaranya embodies for us the glories of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The name 'Naimisaranya' is related to the term *'naimi'*, referring to the chakra released by Brahma

that split the earth open. It is also associated with the sage Gourmukh, who incinerated an *asura* to ashes here. *Varaha Purana* states that Lord Visnu once destroyed an entire army of *asuras* in one second at Naimisaranya, with His Chakra. 'Nimish' means 'an instant', and refers to the place in Naimisaranya forest where this pastime took place.

Naimisaranya is an easy 2-hour drive from Lucknow. ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) has a temple in Lucknow. Spread in a wonderful campus in the Golf Link area of Lucknow amid beautiful gardens, this is the home of gorgeous and merciful Sri Sri Radha Raman Bihari. Temple also has a Gaushala, Govindas Food Court, and a wedding banquet venue.

At the present, most of the temples and holy shrines in Naimisaranya are being well developed and maintained. Signage posts to visit these holy places are marked clearly. Indeed, it is worth visiting the important ancient Sri Naimisaranya Dhama for our purification. Sri Ayodhya Dhama is close by; only a 2-hour drive from Lucknow.

Places to visit in and around Naimisaranya:
1. Chakra Tirtha
2. Suta Gadi
3. Vyasa Gadi
4. Dadhici Kunda (10 km away at Misrikh)
5. Sita Kunda (10 km away at Misrikh)
6. Hanuman Garhi
7. Pandavas residence
8. Lord Rama's Aswamedha Yajna Sthala (Siddheshwar Mahadev Mandir)
9. Sri Paramahansa Gaudiya Math
10. Manu-Satrupa Tapsthala
11. Sri Lalita Devi Temple
12. Gola Gokaran Nath (110 km away, near Nepal border)
13. Hanumat Dham (125 km away)
14. ISKCON Lucknow Temple

1. Chakra Tirtha

Chakra Tirtha is situated at the centre of Naimisaranya. This is the exact spot where the wheel sent by Brahma landed on the earth. At the main entrance of Chakra Tirtha there is a huge gate. Just as one enters, there is a painting of sages headed by Sanuaka Rsi praying to Lord Brahma. At Chakra Tirtha there is a huge wheel surrounding the bottomless lake. Many devotees take a holy dip and perform the circumambulation (parikrama) by encircling outside the huge wheel. Around the lake there are important ancient temples dedicated to Lord Rama, Lord Badrinath and Lord Siva. The atmosphere at Chakra Tirtha is devotional and captivating. On festival days, a huge number of pilgrims visit this place.

At the juncture of *Dvapara-yuga* and present *Kali-yuga*, eighty thousand sages, headed by Saunaka Rsi wanted to perform a sacrifice to hold off the effect of the oncoming evil age. They approached Brahma and pleaded where they could perform a sacrifice that would counteract the influence of Kali and have the greatest effect. Brahma told them, "I will send a disc. Follow it and perform your sacrifice where it hits the earth." The disc (*cakra*) that Brahma sent went spinning down, sped toward the Garbhodaka Ocean and passing through the six planetary systems it finally struck the earth at Cakratirtha, here at Naimisaranya. On seeing that the disc was approaching earth at a tremendous speed, the sages became worried and thought that it would strike the water and the splash would drown the earth. So, they prayed to goddess Durga, the controller of the material energy. She stopped the disc from going any farther.

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In *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 1 chapter 1 verse 4*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada explains, *"In a holy place in the forest of Naimisaranya, great sages headed by the sage Saunaka assembled to perform a great thousand-year sacrifice for the satisfaction of the Lord and His devotees." In the Vayaviya Tantra it is said that Brahma, the engineer of this particular universe, contemplated a great wheel which could enclose the universe. The hub of this great circle was fixed at a particular place known as Naimisaranya. Similarly, there is another reference to the forest of Naimisaranya in the Varaha Purana, where it is stated that by performance of sacrifice at this place, the strength of demoniac people is curtailed. Thus, brahmanas prefer Naimisaranya for such sacrificial performances. [Purport]*

Welcome to Sri Naimisaranya Dhama

Way to Sri Chakra Tirtha

Entrance of Sri Chakra Tirtha

The great sages praying to Lord Brahma

Sri Chakra Tirtha

Sri Chakra Tirtha

Ancient temple of Sri Sri Sita Rama Lakshmana at Chakra Tirtha

Ancient temple of Lord Badrinath at Chakra Tirtha

Ancient temple of Lord Siva at Chakra Tirtha

2. Suta Gadi

Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 1 chapter 1 describes that Suta Gosvami recited *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to the assembly of great sages at Naimisaranya. This place is marked by spot called Suta Gadi. Suta Gadi Temple is on a small, beautiful hillock at a short walk from Chakra Tirtha. Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Lord Balarama are the presiding deities at the main altar. Suta Goswami's deity is on the left side of the main deities.

Srimad-Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana) is the transcendental science for understanding the Supreme Lord, and that the ultimate goal of life for all human beings is to attain the stage of *prema*, or love of the Supreme Lord. It is spotless literature not only for knowing the ultimate source of everything but also for knowing our relation with Him and our duty toward perfection of the human society on the basis of this perfect knowledge. It is a powerful reading matter and is meant for the ultimate good of all people. By a careful reading, one will know the Supreme Lord perfectly well, so much so that the reader will be sufficiently educated to defend himself from the onslaught of atheists. Over and above this, the reader will be able to convert others to accept the Supreme Lord as a concrete principle. (Preface to Srimad-Bhagavatam)

Sri Suta Gadi Temple

Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Lord Balarama are the presiding deities at the main altar

Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Lord Balarama at Sri Suta Gadi Temple

Srila Suta Goswami

Sages in the Forest of Naimisharanya

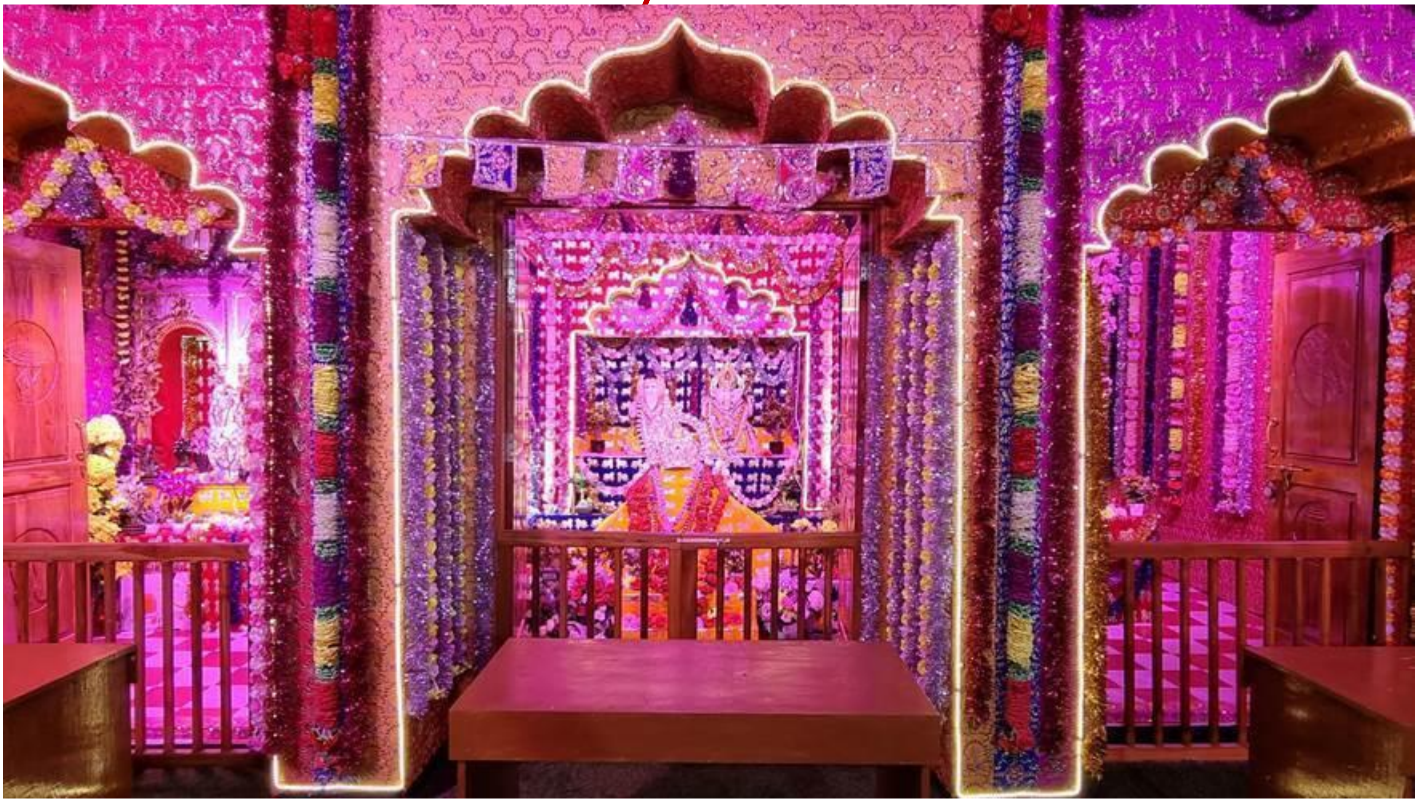
Saunaka, the leader of the sages gathered at the forest of Naimisharanya, said to Suta Goswami, the speaker of Srimad-Bhagavatam, "O Suta, may you live a long life! O saintly one, best of speakers, please continue speaking to us. Indeed, only you can show men the path out of ignorance in which they are wandering." Saunaka then questioned Suta about the history of Markandeya Rshi, a great sage who had survived the previous annihilation of the universe. Suta Goswami replies, "O great sage Saunaka, your very question will help remove everyone's illusion, for it leads to the topics of Lord Narayana [the Supreme Personality of Godead], which cleanse away the contamination of this Kali age."

3. Vyasa Gadi

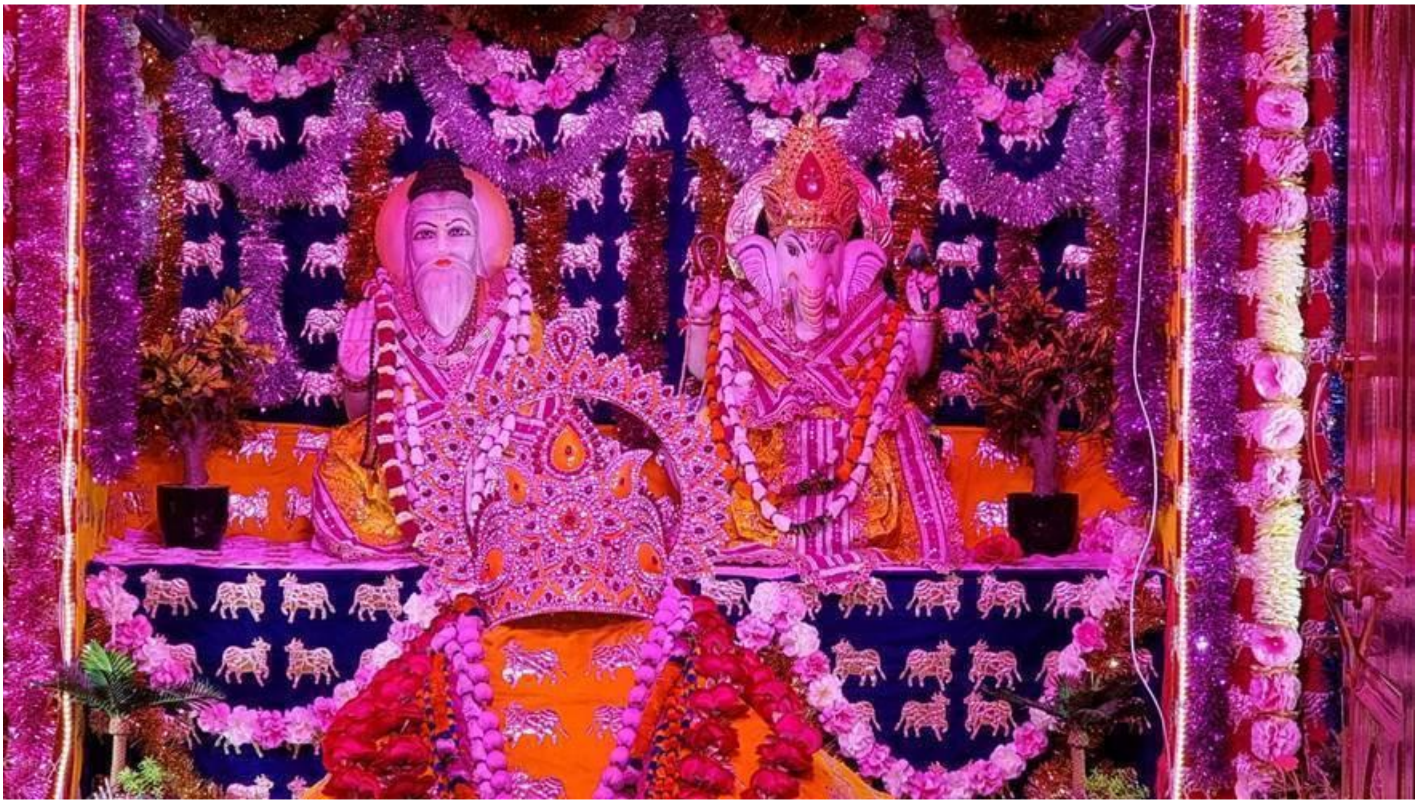
Vyasa Gadi is one of the most important sacred spots in Naimisaranya. Here Srila Vyasadeva bifurcated the Vedas into 6 Sastras, 18 Puranas. Srila Vyasadeva is the empowered plenary portion incarnation of Lord Krishna. Here at Vyasa Gadi (also known as *Vyasa Vatika* or *Vyasadhama*), Veda Vyasa lectured on the *Bhagavata Purana (Srimad-Bhagavatam)* to his own son, Srila Sukadeva Goswami. At the centre of the main altar at Vyasa Gadi Temple there is the deity of Srila Vyasadeva. On his right side there is a deity of Sukadeva Goswami and on left altar is Vyasadeva’s father, Parasara Muni.

Outside the Vyasa Gadi temple there is an ancient 5099-year-old banyan tree. The local *pujaries* say that every year during the Gita Jayanti book marathon in December, a lot of ISKCON devotees come here and distribute *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* to the pilgrims visiting here. Next to the temple there is also a *yajna-shala* (sacrificial arena). Just behind the Vyasa Gadi temple, a tributary of Ganges River flows.

Vyasa Gadi



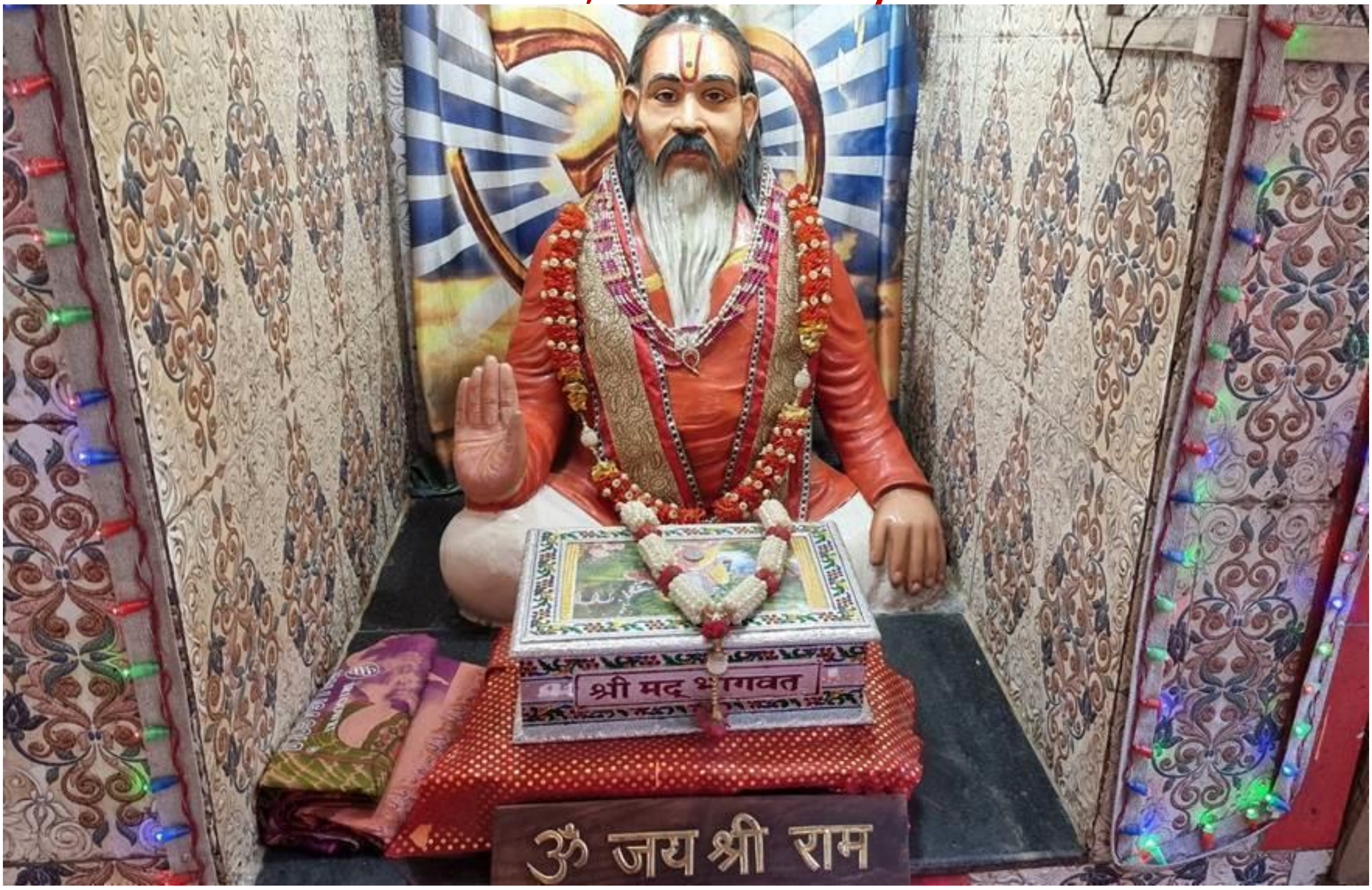
At the centre of the main altar at Vyasa Gadi Temple there is the deity of Srila Vyasadeva. On his right side there is a deity of Sukadeva Goswami and on left altar is Vyasadeva's father, Parasara Muni.



Srila Vyasadeva

Srila Sukadeva Goswami

Parasara Muni, father of Srila Vyasadeva



Srila Vyasadeva and Srimad-Bhagavatam

Gomati River flows just behind the Vyasa Gadi temple

5099-year-old ancient banyan tree at Vyasa Gadi Temple

4. Dadhici Kunda

Dadhici Kunda and Dadhici Muni's residence is at Misrikh, 10 km from Naimisaranya. Among the many inconceivable pastimes that have taken place at the holy dhama of Naimisaranya are those of the great sage Dadhici. Dadhici gave up his body here to Indra so that he could kill Vrstrasura. Dadhici placed himself, the spirit soul, at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and in this way gave up his gross material body made of five elements. After Indra obtained the body of Dadhici, a thunderbolt was manufactured by Visvakarma from

the bones of Dadhici. A fierce battle took place between demigods and the demons at the end of *Satya-yuga* and the beginning of *Treta-yuga* on the bank of Narmada. Vrstrasura was later killed by Indra using the thunderbolt made from the bones of Dadhici. This pastime is described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 6, chapters 7 to 13*. Vrstrasura, in his previous birth, was a great devotee king Citraketu. Being cursed by Mother Parvati, he took birth as a demon Vrstrasura. However, due to his intense loving devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, he obtained the Lord's lotus feet at the end of his life, even being born as a demon Vrstrasura.

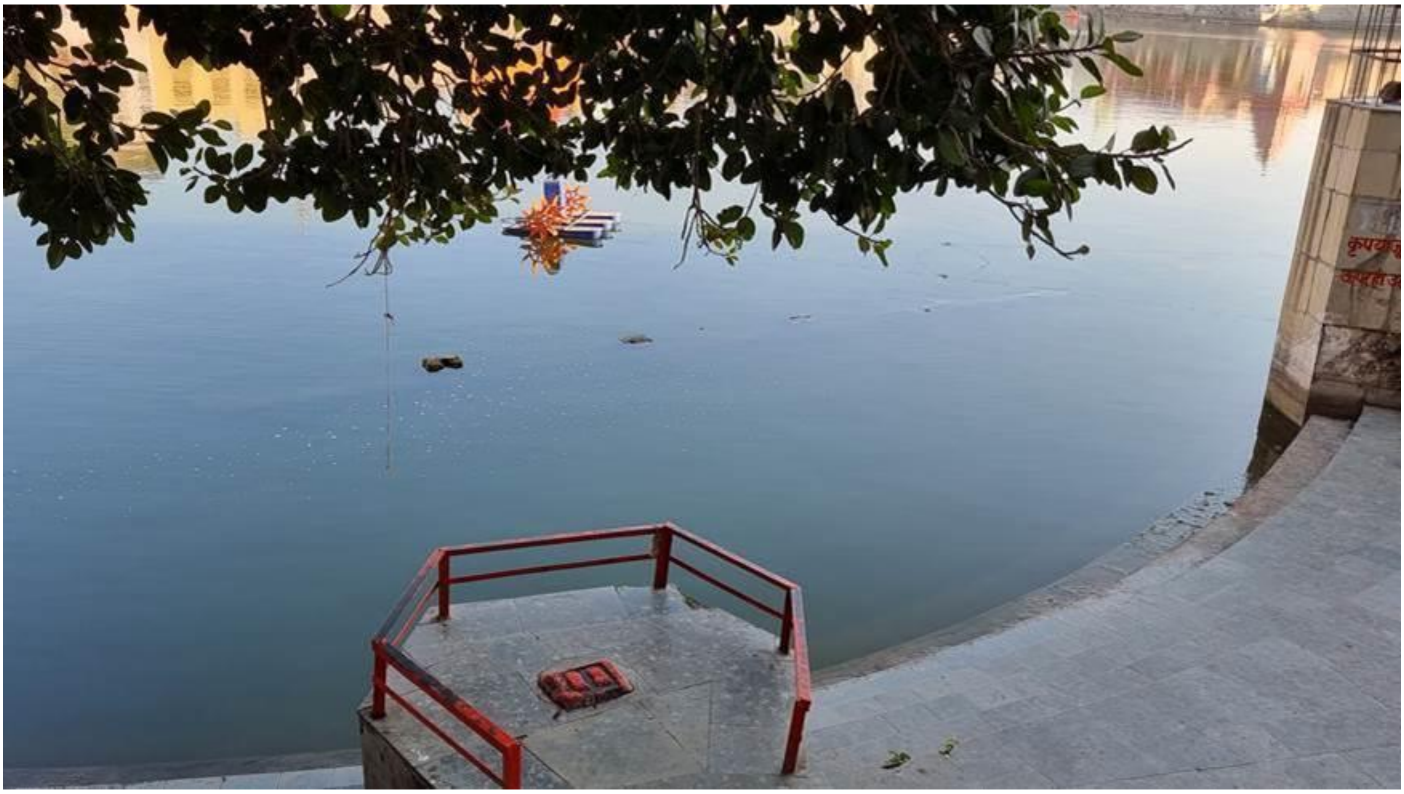
Inside Dadhici's residence there is the exact spot where he sacrificed his bones. There are also shrines dedicated to his father, mother and wife. There is also a beautiful garden which has a rare Parijata tree. Local *pujaries* say that this tree is green for 6 months and for next 6 months it doesn't have leaves. Every day, irrespective, there is one highly fragrant flower that comes on the tree and is offered to the deities.

Outside the main gate of Dadhici's residence there is a huge and beautiful Dadhici Kunda. Before donating his bones, Dadhici Muni wanted to take a bath in all the holy waters around the country before sacrificing himself, but he had no time. So, Indra brought waters of all holy Tirthas to Naimisaranya and hence it is also known as 'Misrikh Tirtha' or Dadhici Kunda.

In another pastime about Dadhici Muni, *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 6, chapter 9 verse 52* purport describes: The great saint Dadhici had perfect knowledge of how to perform fruitive activities, and he had advanced spiritual knowledge as well. Knowing this, the Asvini-kumaras once approached him and begged him to instruct them in spiritual science (*brahma-vidya*). Dadhici Muni replied, "I am now engaged in arranging sacrifices for fruitive activities. Come back some time later." When the Asvini-kumaras left, Indra, the King of heaven, approached Dadhici and said, "My dear Muni, the Asvini-kumaras are only physicians. Please do not instruct them in spiritual science. If you impart the spiritual science to them despite my warning, I shall punish you by cutting off your head." After warning Dadhici in this way, Indra returned to heaven. The Asvini-kumaras, who understood Indra's desires, returned and begged Dadhici for *brahma-vidya*. When the great saint Dadhici informed them of Indra's threat, the Asvini-kumaras replied, "Let us first cut off your head and replace it with the head of a horse. You can instruct *brahma-vidya* through the horse's head, and when Indra returns and cuts off that head, we shall reward you and restore your original head." Since Dadhici had promised to impart *brahma-vidya* to the Aavinī-kumaras, he agreed to their proposal. Therefore, because Dadhici imparted *brahma-vidya* through the mouth of a horse, this *brahma-vidya* is also known as Asvasira.

Way to Dadhici Kunda

Dadhici Kunda



Beautiful and revered Dadhici Kunda

Dadhici Kunda

Entrance of Dadhici Muni's residence

Deities worshiped at Dadhici's residence

Dadhici's father, Atharva

Exact spot where Dadhici Muni donated his bones to Indra

Dadhici donating his bones to Indra

Parijata tree at Dadhici's residence

Indra defeats Vritrasura using the thunderbolt made from Dadhici's bones

5. Sita Kunda

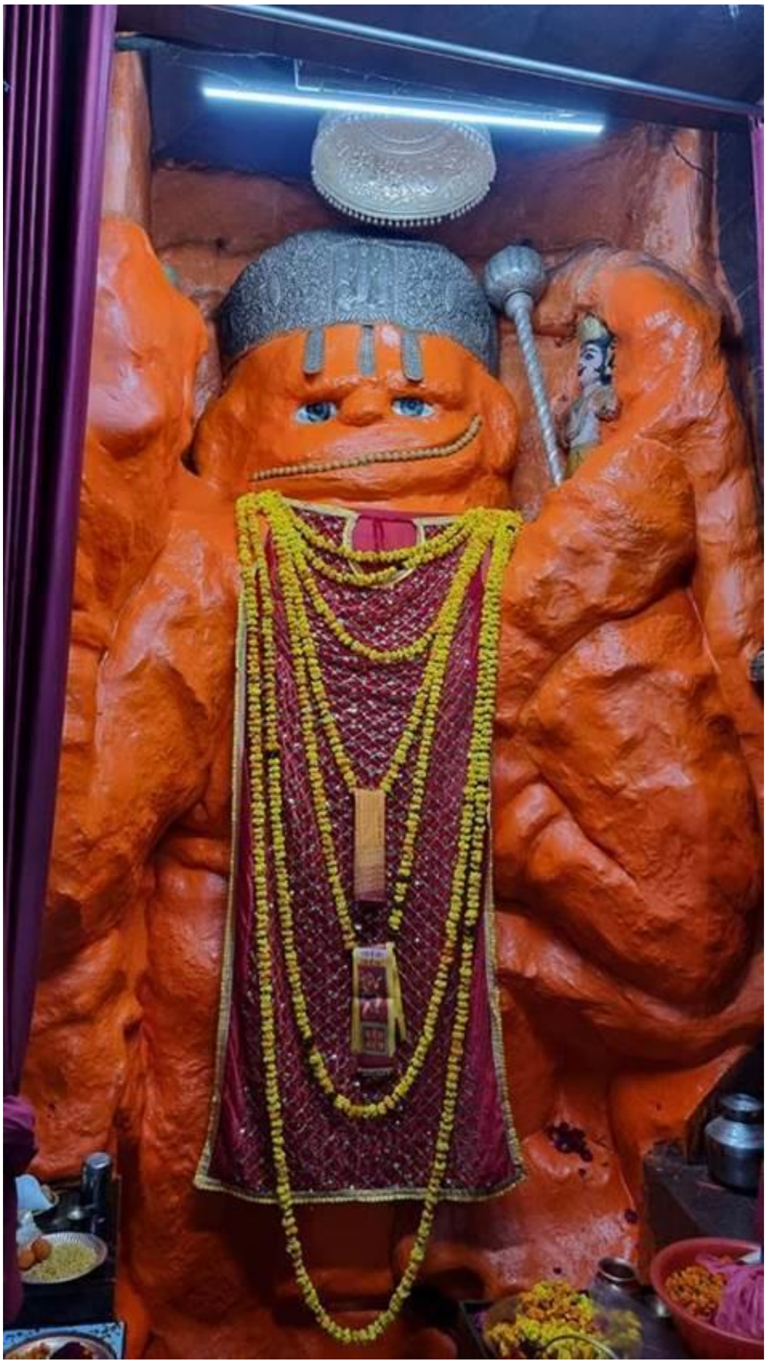
Close to Dadhici Kunda is the revered Sita or Janaki Kunda. Another name of Sita is Janaki as she was the daughter of Maharaja Janaka. At this place, Sita devi took bath. This kunda is deep.

Sita Kunda

6. Hanuman Garhi

As described in the *Ramayana*, in *Treta-yuga*, another pastime took place involving Sri Rama Lakshmana, the great devotee Hanuman, and the demon Ravana. When the demon Ravana captured Rama and Lakshmana and spirited them off to Patalaloka, at the bottom of the universe, Hanuman rescued them. While bringing Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders, Makardhvaj changed their path, and this resulted in Hanuman arriving in Naimisaranya.

There is a self-manifested Hanuman deity here, standing 18 feet tall, with Rama on one shoulder and Lakshmana on the other. When devotees come to get darshan, they offer *laddus* (round sweets) to Hanuman Ji. Hanuman Garhi at Naimisaranya is one of the most beautiful places in the Tirtha. (Reference: On Pilgrimage in Holy India book by HH Bhakti Vikasa Swami Maharaj)



Hanuman Ji at with Lord Rama on one shoulder and Lakshmana on the other

7. Pandavas Residence

Pandavas came to Naimisaranya during their exile. Pandavas residence also known as Pancha Pandava Temple is located close to Hanuman Garhi temple. Here we can have the darshans of Lord Sri Krishna, Draupadi, and the five Pandavas – Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva.

Five Pandavas – Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, Lord Sri Krishna (centre) and Draupadi

8. Lord Rama's Aswamedha Yajna Sthala (Siddheshwar Mahadev Mandir)

Lord Ramacandra performed the Tenth *Aswamedha yajna* at Naimisaranya after returning from exile, as mentioned in the Ramayana. This place is marked by the ancient Sri Rama Lakshmana Sita Temple (also known as Siddheshwar Mahadev Mandir). Temple has beautiful deities of Sri Sri Sita Rama Lakshmana. On the side of this temple there is the famous Dashashwamedh Ghat.

Lord Rama's Aswamedha Yajna Sthala

Sri Sri Sita Rama Lakshmana

9. Sri Paramahansa Gaudiya Math

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura visited Naimisaranya. This math was established by Srila Bhakti Siddhantha Saraswati Goswami Thakur on 1925. Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Radha Vinod Vilas Jiu are the presiding deities at the Temple. This Math is on Sri Lalita Devi Temple road.

There is a following account in 'A Ray of Visnu': *"Srila Sarasvati Thakura also went to Badarinarayana, the site of the first Srimad-Bhagavatam recitation; to Sukara-tala, the site of the second recitation of the Bhagavatam; and to Naimisaranya, the site of the Bhagavatam's third recitation, and he preached the glories of these places."*

Sri Paramahansa Gaudiya Math

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Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Radha Vinod Vilas Jiu

10. Manu-Satrupa Tapsthala

Manu-Satrupa Tapsthala is located directly opposite to Vyasa Gadi. At this place, Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa performed rigorous austerities for 23,000 years. Naimisaranya at that time was dense forest, and was a famous place for gaining *siddhi*, or concrete achievement in spiritual life. Inside the temple there are deities of Sri Sri Sita Rama. On Their side are Svayambhuva Manu and Satarupa. Outside the main altar, there are deities of Svayambhuva Manu and Satarupa performing austerities. *Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 4 chapter 1 describes* Svayambhuva Manu begot three daughters in his wife, Satarupa, and their names were Akuti, Devahuti and Prasuti. They also had sons, Priyavrata and Uttanapada. Devahuti got married to Kardama Muni and their son was Lord Kapila.

Lord Siva once explained to Parvati the reason for the three primary manifestations of Lord Ramacandra. The second of these reasons is connected to the penance performed by Manu and Satarupa here at Naimisaranya. Although living a royal life, Svayambhuva Manu also lived like a sage for prolonged periods. At one point, he became frustrated by worldly matters, and handed rule of his empire over to his son. Taking his wife Satarupa, he went to Naimisaranya to take up residence in a hermitage. In their hermitage, the couple led a very strict life, taking only fruits and roots as foodstuffs. Soon, however, they began to accept only water, and fell into a deep meditation.

Their great desire was to have a vision of the Supreme Lord, who is the source of infinite pleasure, and from whom inconceivable incarnations and expansions emanate over the course of the *kalpas*. They ceased taking water and began to live on air alone. Next, the couple entered an even more stringent program of austerity, ceasing all breath. Standing on one leg and taking no air. During this time, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva visited them several times, offering them boons to refrain from such extreme austerities. But nothing could deviate them from their meditation. Their bodies had simply become skeletons. Eventually, the Supreme Lord directly intervened, and both Manu and Satarupa heard a great voice from the skies. The sound vibration restored their skeletal bodies, and they again became healthy and beautiful figures, appearing as fresh as if they had just arrived from the royal palace. In this state, they entered into a fathomless ocean of love for Lord Hari.

Both prayed to get darshan of the Lord. Thus, the Supreme Personality, the devotee-lover, treasure house of bliss, the omnipresent and almighty Lord appeared before the praying couple. His hue was greater than the azure skies and blue hills; His face was like the full autumn moon, His throat decorated with three lines, like a conch. His eyes were like freshly blossomed lotus petals, His ears were ornamented with *makarakundala*; He had a jewel crown on His head and His chest bore a beautiful footmark. Jewelled garlands covered His neck and chest and He was dressed in yellow sapphire. His bow and arrow were in His hands and an arrow bag behind His waist. On His left was Janaki.

Both Manu and Satarupa were content to stared without blinking at the beautiful Form of the Lord, and they lost their own bodily senses. Falling at the feet of the Supreme, Manu prayed to get a son like Him. This wish was granted by the Supreme Lord, who assured the couple that He would take birth as their son in some future *kalpa*. Janaki would also take birth along with the Lord. Thus, by Krishna's arrangement, Manu would become the king of Ayodhya, and Rama would take birth as his son. The Lord promised it three times, then disappeared. Afterwards, Manu and Satarupa lived for a few days more in the hermitage, on the bank of the sacred Gomati, before taking their last breath.

Entrance of Manu-Satrupa Tapsthala

Sri Sri Sita Rama. On Their side are Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa

Sri Sri Sita Rama. On Their side are Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa

Svayambhuva Manu performing austerities standing on one leg

Satarupa performing austerities

11. Sri Lalita Devi Temple

As described above, on seeing that Lord Brahma’s chakra (disc) was approaching the earth at a tremendous speed, the sages became worried and thought that it would strike the water and the splash would drown the earth. So, they prayed to goddess Durga, the controller of the material energy. A manifestation of Durga, Sri Lalita Devi, appeared at Naimisharanya to stop the disc from going farther. The water gushed from the earth where the chakra landed. Adi Sankaracarya established the temple of Sri Lalita Devi.

Sri Lalita Devi

12. Gola Gokaran Nath

Sri Gokarnanath Temple at Naimisaranya is a representation of the original Gola Gokaran Nath, located 110 km from Naimisaranya in northern Uttar Pradesh, near the Nepal border. During the great war of Ramayana in *Treta-yuga*, Ravana pleased Lord Siva with his penance so that he could win the war against Lord Rama. Lord Siva took the shape of a *Siva-linga* and directed him to install it in Sri Lanka. But Lord Siva proposed the condition that *Siva-linga* should not be put on the ground on its way to Lanka. But on the way back, Ravana had to give the *Siva-linga* to a shepherd to attend nature's call. Lord Siva increased the weight of the *Siva-linga*, so the shepherd had to give up and put it on the ground.

This made Ravana very angry as he understood the trickery of Lord Siva. Ravana realized that Lord Siva did not want the *linga* to be carried to Lanka and let Ravana win the war. Enraged, Ravana pressed the *linga* with his thumb, resulting in an impression which looked like a cow's ear *(go karna)*. It is on this basis that the place was named Gola Gokarana Nath. Apart from the main shrine, there are several small temples and holy water bodies in this place. In the main temple, there is a round stone in a well four feet below the ground like a *linga* or phallus. Nearby, there is Gajmochan Lake, which is worth a visit.

13. Hanumat Dham

About 125 km from Naimisaranya is Hanumat Dham in Shahjahanpur. It is famous for a 104-foot-tall grand deity of Hanuman Ji. Many devotees come and take the darshans. The holy site is at Visratghat on the banks of the Khannaut River.

104-foot-tall grand deity of Hanuman Ji at Hanumat Dham

14. ISKCON Lucknow Temple

Spread in a wonderful campus in the Golf Link area of Lucknow amid beautiful gardens, this is the home of gorgeous and merciful Sri Sri Radha Raman Bihari. The temple also has a Gaushala, Govindas Food Court and a wedding banquet venue.

Address: Sri Sri Radharaman Bihari ISKCON Temple, Golf City, Amar Shaheed Path, Ansal, Lucknow.

Entrance of Sri Sri Radha Raman Bihari ISKCON Lucknow Temple

Beautiful gardens inside ISKCON Lucknow campus leading to the Temple

ISKCON Lucknow

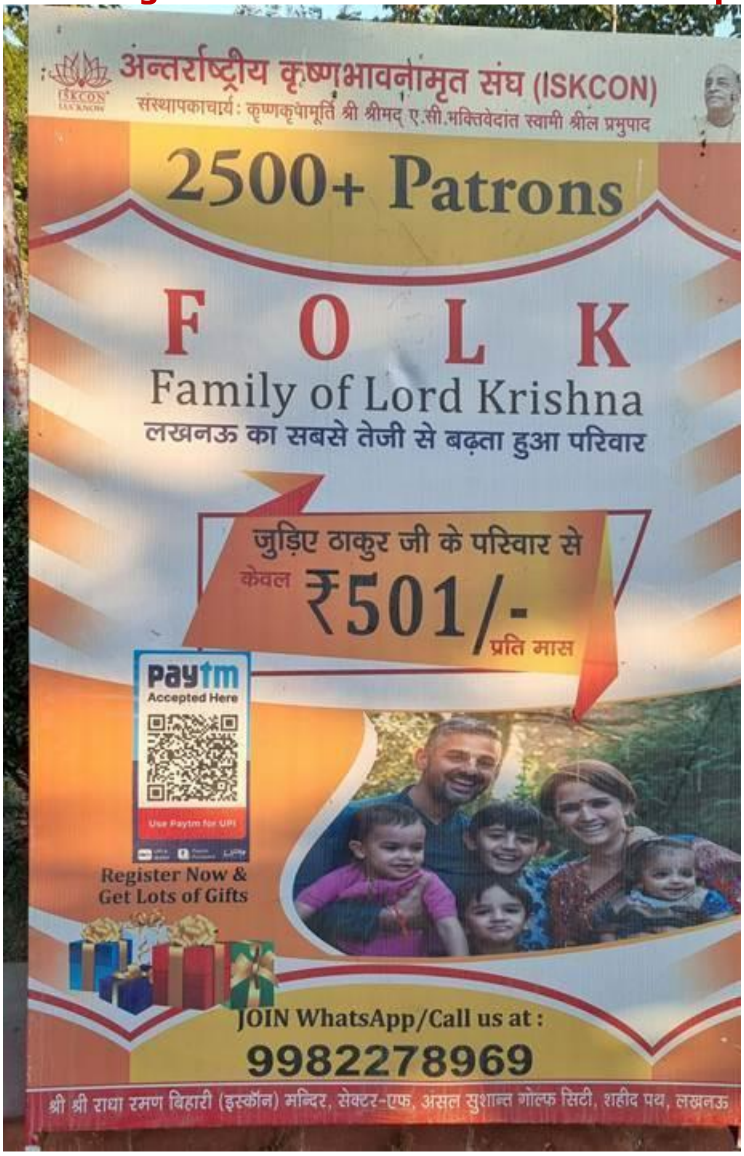
Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Raman Bihari

Sri Sri Radha Raman Bihari

Gaushala at ISKCON Lucknow

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-acraya of International Society for Krishna consciousness (ISKCON)

Beautiful gardens at ISKCON Lucknow campus



ISKCON Lucknow

ISKCON Lucknow

Lord Balarama Kills Balvala

To satisfy the request of the brahmanas at Naimisharanya, Lord Balarama prepared to meet the demon Balvala. At the time when the demon usually came there, a storm filled the sky and then Balvala began to throw stool and other impure substances on the arena of sacrifice.

Balvala was a gigantic blackish person, and as he approached, flying in the sky, Lord Balarama immediately dragged him down with His plow and angrily smashed the demon's head with His club. (Summarized from Krishna Book, Chapter 79)

Directions to reach Naimisaranya:
Naimisaranya is an easy 2-hour drive from Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh state. Lucknow is well connected by flights, rail and road from throughout India.

Useful Resources:

Naimisaranya Dhama Yatra 1999 lectures by HH Radhanath Swami Maharaj:
Lecture 1: https://audio.iskcondesiretree.com/02_-_ISKCON_Swamis/ISKCON_Swamis_-_R_to_Y/His_Holiness_Radhanath_Swami/Lectures/02_-_Yatra/1999_Ayodhya_Naimisaranya/Naimisaranya_Yatra_-_Lecture_02_-_Radhanath_Swami_1999_Naimisaranya.mp3

Lord Balarama's visit to Naimisaranya and liberation of Balvala demon:
https://vedabase.io/en/library/sb/10/79/

Summary of Srimad-Bhagavatam by HG Bhurijana Prabhu:
http://www.dandavats.com/?p=30457

The Sages of Naimisharanya: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN7N9t2P1QQ

ISKCON Lucknow: https://www.facebook.com/iskcontemplelucknow/
https://iskconlucknowup.org/index_HOME.html

Sri Ayodhya Dhama Yatra: https://sri-ayodhya-dharma-yatra.blogspot.com/2023/03/sri-ayodhya-dharma-yatra.html

Shukratal Yatra and Glories of Srimad-Bhagavatam: https://shukratal-yatra.blogspot.com/

Mayapur TV: http://Mayapur.tv / **Vrindavana TV:** http://Vrindavan.tv

Holy Pilgrimages – Journey to Holy Dhamas: www.Holy-Pilgrimages.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/HolyPilgrimages
Holy Dham: www.HolyDham.com

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare |
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare ||